

Article

Distance Education and Women's Empowerment: Mental Health Implications

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Abstract

The study focused on enhancing women's empowerment through distance education in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. The study was guided by three research questions. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study was 640 members of the registered women's organizations in Nsukka Local Government. The sample size was 320 women. Multi-staged sampling technique was used. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled 'Enhancing Women Empowerment through Distance Education' (EWEDE). A reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed using the weighted mean. Findings revealed that to a very high extent, distance education can contribute to the enhancement of political, economic, and social empowerment of women in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. This is because women acquire sound political, economic, and social education, which results in active participation in more profitable businesses and life endeavors. A recommendation was made that the government should fund distance education.

Keywords: Distance Education, Empowerment, Women, Mental Health

Introduction

Education encompasses a range of activities that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and societal norms. It also serves as a means to drive social transformation. Education is recognized as a means of promoting social, economic, political, scientific, and technical progress (Bušelić, 2017) as well as enhancing people's well-being. The gender ratio in Nigeria, especially in Nsukka LGA, indicates that women's participation in education, politics, economics, social affairs, and administration is less than that of their male counterparts, which has not produced any significant outcomes (Mirian, 2015). This phenomenon can be attributed to the inherent division of labour, where men assume the role of leadership and women serve as their subordinate and supportive partners. As a result, men are typically assigned responsibilities related to development, accomplishments, decision-making, and other similar tasks, while women are typically assigned lesser duties such as cooking, taking care of the family, and other household chores. This culturally ingrained gender inequality has a strong impact on the mental health of women (Vigod & Rochon, 2020).

The aforementioned situation has persisted for decades among women in the Nsukka local government region of Enugu state due to limited or nonexistent formal education. Consistent with the aforementioned, Miller (2007) observed that in the contemporary world, the overall participation of women in education at all levels remains below 50%. However, Ibrahim et al. (2020) stated that the education of women is a fundamental principle that facilitates the advancement of social and

economic development. Without a doubt, having access to high-quality education is a necessary condition for improving women's empowerment. According to (Reshi et al., 2022), education is thought to empower individuals, particularly women, by equipping them with the necessary skills to gain confidence, overcome poverty, and enhance their standard of living by contributing to society and exercising their human rights. Nevertheless, the structure of the conventional classroom-based educational system, which confines instruction to specific time and location, has placed women, full-time employees, and other adult learners residing distant from the school at a disadvantage. Therefore, the necessity for remote or distant learning arises.

Distance education refers to the delivery of educational activities and experiences that enable the acquisition of knowledge from a distance, using electronic devices and technologies in enhancing student-student and student-teacher communication. Distance education is a program that promotes the concept that learning should not be limited by time and space. It is an educational initiative that provides opportunities for many types of adult learners, full-time workers, and people in remote areas who cannot attend classroom instructions, to participate in various educational programs with freedom (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2023; Simonson, 2019). Distance education encompasses several forms of learning, such as online education, home study, virtual education, web learning, correspondence courses, extension education, independent studies, and technology-supported education.

Distance education is now an essential instrument for boosting women's empowerment in our modern era. The reason for this is that teaching and learning activities in a campus-based education context have traditionally been governed by specific times and locations. Participants in these educational environments are required to be physically present at certain locations and times in order to participate in instructional activities. Many women, particularly those in rural areas, are situated in remote locations far from regular educational institutions. Additionally, some women face financial constraints that prevent them from affording the expenses associated with traditional education systems (Meenambigai, 2018). The limitations of the physical learning environment in campus-based educational settings may put a variety of women in the Nsukka local government area of Enugu state at a disadvantage. This includes women who have regular jobs or are responsible for taking care of their families. Distance education is a highly successful option that may be used as a supplement or even a replacement for traditional classroom learning. Therefore, distance education can serve as a dependable tool for promoting women's empowerment.

Empowerment refers to the systematic effort to enhance an individual's ability and broaden their range of opportunities. Empowerment is necessary when individuals or groups are unable to achieve their full potential and pursue their aspirations owing to artificial obstacles imposed by others in the same community. It represents an undeniable disparity, segregation, or marginalization (Felix Kayode Olakulein & Olugbenga David Ojo, 2006). Empowerment is the transformative process that grants individuals increased autonomy in making decisions, choices, and taking action. In the study of (Grealish et al., 2016), empowerment mediates the relationship between psychological processes and mental health, well-being, and

recovery. It is important to note that the mental health of women is improved with empowerment, which is an important determinant of the actual place of women in society (Samouei et al., 2018). Women empowerment is the means of acquiring power and being in control of their lives and having the capability of making deliberate choices (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023). It is important to note that when there is no gender discrimination, there will be sustainable national development and progress (Olonade et al., 2021).

Empowerment enables women to acquire self-assurance and provides them with the resilience to address gender disparities within their households, communities, nations, and on a global scale. Empowerment involves altering the characteristics and trajectory of individuals to benefit those who are marginalized in society. Women empowerment includes facilitating women to engage in independent thinking, decision-making, and proactive behaviour. According to Olonade et al. (2021), women empowerment involves recognizing the capabilities, opportunities, and influence that women have in shaping their own future. Women empowerment is a complex process that encompasses the transformation of ideas, conventions, relationships, and structures related to the distribution of resources and power (O'Neil et al., 2014).

Obstacles to women's empowerment have deprived them of the opportunity for the necessary health services meant for women, which can only be understood and handled by them, such as reproductive health problems. Therefore, there is a need for women's empowerment and inclusion in polity as part and parcel of decision-making on issues regarding women's health (Nwogwugwu, 2019). Utilizing distance education to empower women is an effective strategy for fostering political, economic, and social development, as well as attaining peace and security.

For instance, impoverished women frequently find themselves trapped inside an ethnic or social context that perceives them as occupying a subordinate position. This leads to their subjugation by males. Again, various obstacles such as cultural biases, including patriarchal norms, economic, and legal barriers, restrict women's involvement in politics with resultant negative impact on their emotional health (Adamu, 2023; Farias et al., 2023). Thus, it is crucial to explore the prevailing political, economic, and social agenda in achieving women's empowerment through distance education.

Politically, distance education enables women to gain the knowledge and mindset necessary for participating in the voting process as both voters and candidates. Distance education enables women in Nsukka to compete with men for political roles. According to D. Agbalajobi (2016), the Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP) serves as a demonstration of the political empowerment of women through the successful use of distance education. The authors state that the primary goal of FONWIP is to advance women's empowerment and eliminate all types of violence and discrimination against women, which directly or indirectly affects their emotional health. It promotes and facilitates women's participation in decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors. The group arranges seminars on topics such as empowerment and inequality, among other subjects. The organization has a significant impact on its goals. It has advocated for a 30% quota

for women in government positions. Additionally, it has made multiple efforts to raise awareness about gender issues in public policies and has conducted workshops for women interested in pursuing public office.

Economically, distance education has the potential to enable women in Nsukka to elevate their companies from small-scale commerce to large-scale wholesale operations. Distance education can broaden women's awareness of existing economic opportunities and enable them to gain access to them, thereby empowering them. This has significant implications in the Nsukka Local Government Area. Despite the significant number of women in Nsukka LGA, they have been marginalized from taking crucial economic roles due to their limited educational background. Within the field of agriculture globally, women constitute 45% of the workforce in agriculture, growing food just for their families, as they are accorded the privilege of only 15% of land possession (Mishra, Maurya, Arulmanikandan, 2022). Women's limited access to land, credit facilities, and social capital is primarily due to their lack of expertise. However, economic empowerment of women results in dignity and respect instead of demeaning or aggressive behaviors (Bengesai & Derera, 2021). Economic empowerment of partners, which results in a high educational level and increased family affluence, decreases the chances of intimate partner violence (Stöckl et al., 2021), which greatly impacts mental health negatively.

Socially, distance education can enhance the ability of women in Nsukka to maintain a robust social network throughout their households, communities, and the entire nation. The program offers Nsukka women the chance to engage with individuals from diverse cultures, tribes, or ethnicities, thus fostering social cohesion. Supporting the aforementioned assertion, Ibrahim et al. (2020) argue that social ties and empowerment are usually observed at four distinct levels: the person level, where women have a positive self-perception and a desire to actively engage in life, the family level, the community level, and the level of social policy. All layers of the relationship are crucial. Without access to quality education, women are unable to fully engage and contribute at all levels, particularly in the community and national spheres. Participation is essential as it has the potential to foster community growth. It is not surprising that Bušelić (2017) noted that remote education is a significant method for empowering women by providing them with the required knowledge, skills, and self-assurance to actively engage in the development process. The active involvement and engagement of women in the community accelerates the pace of developmental initiatives.

The study on enhancing women's empowerment through distance education is anchored on Marxist feminism, which was proposed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. Marxist theories regarding gender primarily focus on examining the connection between class exploitation and the disparities in gender equality. Marxist feminism represents a segment of Marxist social theory that critiques Capitalist Patriarchy, highlights the interconnectedness of class and gender, seeks to address alienation, and underscores the importance of education in empowering women (Robinson, 2018; Brown & Fee, 2003). This empowerment allows women to confront their oppression and advocate for social transformation. Distance education has the potential to enhance educational access for women,

especially those from marginalized backgrounds, offering a space for them to contest patriarchal norms and stereotypes while fostering critical thinking and feminist awareness. This is in line with the model of women's empowerment that seeks to define the empowerment of women and girls as the enhancement of options and the amplification of their voices through the alteration of power dynamics, enabling them to gain greater control over their lives and futures (French Gates, 2014).

Distance education, therefore, enables women to fulfill social expectations. Distance education can contribute to the enhancement of social status for women in Nsukka LGA. This is due to the positive impact that higher educational certificates obtained through distance education can have on their social standing. Women who are civil servants enhance their service delivery by utilizing remote education. The reason for this is that distance education provides them with the chance to enhance their technical, management, and administrative abilities. Olakulein and Olugbenga (2006) provided a concise overview of the ways in which distant education contributes to empowering women. They highlighted the distinctiveness of distance education as a method for women's empowerment, as it encompasses various aspects of the social system. The first group to be taken into account consists of women who are dedicated exclusively to housework, many of whom have never had the opportunity to receive a formal education or were forced to abandon school at a young age. The women in this category generally lack enthusiasm for formal education because of their husbands' instruction that they should remain at home and fulfill domestic responsibilities, including taking care of the household and children. The limited educational attainment of women hinders their ability to make meaningful contributions to the social, economic, and political aspects of a society (Bušelić, 2017)

Typically, the obstacles presented by this social structure are extensive, as women are unable to leave their spouses and children to attend a formal educational institution where they can seek desired training, skill development, and education. Many individuals find satisfaction in witnessing their aspirations manifest in the lives of their children, often unknowingly imparting their own ambitions onto their offspring. Women in this demographic would undoubtedly appreciate remote education, since it enables them to remain at home and pursue an educational program without compromising their marriages or neglecting their children. It is undeniably a way to achieve the life aspirations of numerous women burdened with the role of being a homemaker. Providing women with high-quality education is essential because educating a woman is equivalent to educating the entire nation. Women's ability to give birth and raise children makes quality education crucial for them to establish a high-quality household, which will invariably result in sound mental health. This is reiterated by Shawon (2023), who pointed out that women's empowerment positively impacts mental health, thereby reducing the possibility of anxiety and depression. Studies have been conducted on women's empowerment through distance education (Bordoloi, 2018; Phillips, 2016; Siedlecki, 2020). However, to the best of the knowledge of the researchers, there is an understudy on the perception of the women of Nsukka LGA, Enugu State, Nigeria regarding women empowerment through distance education. It is against this backdrop that the study aimed to determine the women's opinion regarding the extent distance

education can contribute to their empowerment politically, economically, and socially in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State.

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive survey design. The purpose of a descriptive survey is to systematically gather data and provide a detailed description of the qualities, features, or facts of a certain community (Tom et al., 2021). The researchers chose to utilize a descriptive survey approach to collect information on women's opinions on women's empowerment through distance education in the Nsukka Local Government Area. This research is suitable because it aims to investigate how these women who experience gender inequality perceive how empowerment through distance education can help them politically, economically, and socially. The research was conducted in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu. The Nsukka Local Government is situated in the northern senatorial area of Enugu State. The study is focused on Nsukka LGA due to its rural nature and high population of illiterate women.

The study population consists of 640 individuals who were members of the ten registered women organisations in Nsukka Local Government Area. The study utilized a sample size of 320 women, representing 50% of the total population. The rationale for utilizing percentages aligns with Nwanna's argument in (Mirian, 2015) that when a population is relatively small, a minimum of 40% sample or more can effectively represent the entire community. The researcher designed questionnaires titled "Enhancing Women Empowerment through Distance Education Questionnaire" (EWEDEQ), including socio-demographic information were completed by participants. A total of 320 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, and 313 of the copies were returned, resulting in a return rate of 97%. The instrument is a 4-point scale ranging from "Very Low Extent (VLE)" to "Very High Extent (VHE)". Limits of real numbers were used in arriving at the decisions. A reliability coefficient of 0.77 was established, which revealed that the instrument has a good internal consistency reliability. The study utilized a two-staged sampling technique. Initially, the researcher employed the simple random selection technique to choose five women's organisations. The purpose of employing this sampling technique is to ensure that all cooperative societies are afforded equal opportunities and to prevent any form of prejudice. During the second stage, the researcher employed purposive sampling to choose 64 women from each of the five designated women's organisations. This resulted in a cumulative total of 320 samples. The researchers employed purposive sampling to exercise their discretion in selecting women who were actively involved in distant learning or had a keen interest in it (Yusuff, 2017). Percentage, frequencies, and weighted mean were used to answer the research questions. The cutoff point was obtained using the following decisions: $VHE=4$, $HE=3$, $LE=2$, $VLE=1$. Therefore, $1+2+3+4=10/4=2.5$. After the data analysis, 2.5 and above was used as the criterion mean for acceptance, indicating a high and very high extent. Below 2.5 indicates low and very low extent. The decisions were based on the utilization of the boundaries of real numbers.

Results

The socio-demographic information of the participant is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants (n = 313).

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	10	3%
	26-35	65	21%
	36-50	122	39%
	51-65	109	35%
	66-Above	7	2%
Educational qualifications	No Formal Education	99	32%
	FSLC	135	43%
	WASSCE/NECO/ GCE/TCII	47	15%
	OND/NCE	22	7%
	HND/Degree	10	3%
Occupation	Farming	121	39%
	Civil Servant	28	9%
	Trading	84	27%
	Artisan	61	19%
	House wife	19	6%
Marital status	Single	0	0%
	Married	206	66%
	Divorced	8	3%
	Separated	10	3%
	Widow	89	28%

Table 2: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which distance education can contribute to enhancing political empowerment of women (n = 313).

S/N	Item Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	No of Resp	EX	Mean X	Decision Rule
1	Women can acquire a sound political education through DE.	188	89	29	7	313	1084	3.46	Accept
2	DE empowers women for active political participation.	155	100	41	17	313	1019	3.25	Accept
3	Women acquire the strong courage and spirit of voting and being voted for through D E.	78	67	79	89	313	760	2.42	Reject
4	Through DE, most women have stopped seeing politics as a dirty game.	100	180	20	13	313	993	3.17	Accept
5	Most women have stopped seeing politics as men affair through DE.	105	165	10	33	313	968	3.09	Accept
6	DE has empowered women to strive for political positions alongside their male counterparts	210	19	29	55	313	1010	3.22	Accept
7	The more women subscribe to DE, the more they are politically empowered.	89	188	6	30	313	962	3.07	Accept

Table 2 shows the responses of the participants about the extent to which distance education has contributed to the improvement of women's political empowerment in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The survey replies indicated average ratings for items 7-14 were 2.71, 2.61, 2.84, 3.42, 3.26, 2.50, and 2.85, respectively. Thus, as all the scores met the criterion of being above 2.50, it indicates that the respondents agreed that DE can contribute to a high extent to women's economic empowerment in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

Table 3: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which distance education can contribute to enhancing economic empowerment of women (n = 313).

S/N	Item Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	No of Resp	EX	Mean X	Decision Rule
8	Distance education empowers women to engage in more profitable businesses.	101	89	23	100	313	817	2.71	Accept
9	Women who passed through DE contribute more to economic growth than those who didn't pass through it.	59	54	88	112	313	686	2.61	Accept
10	Women acquire skills for business growth through D E.	78	151	40	44	313	889	2.84	Accept
11	Distance education leads to human capital development.	199	59	45	10	313	1073	3.42	Accept
12	Women's participation in DE leads to national economic development.	200	45	18	50	313	1021	3.26	Accept
13	Through distance education, women can share business ideas with people from other cultures.	40	28	47	198	313	537	2.50	Accept
14	Women learn online marketing, which is the fastest means of growing an economy through DE.	105	108	49	51	313	893	2.85	Accept

Authors' work

Table 3 shows the responses of the participants about the extent to which distance education has contributed to the improvement of women's political empowerment in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The survey replies indicated that the average ratings for items 7-14 were 2.71, 2.61, 2.84, 3.42, 3.26, 2.50, and 2.85, respectively. Thus, as all the scores met the criterion of being above 2.50, it indicates that the respondents agreed that DE can contribute to a high extent to women's economic empowerment in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

Table 4: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which distance education has contributed to enhancing social empowerment of women (n = 313).

S/N	Items Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	No of Resp	EX	Mean X	Decision Rule
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15	Distance education provides an opportunity for women who have never had any form of interaction with people from other races to do so.	178	35	71	29	313	988	3.15	Accept
16	DE education enables women to strengthen their social relationships.	87	20	35	171	313	649	2.57	Accept
17	Through DE, women learn to mix with people from other tribes and cultures.	125	69	88	31	313	914	2.92	Accept
18	DE eliminates geographical barriers to learning.	157	56	61	39	313	952	3.04	Accept
19	Through DE, women are exposed to a higher level of socialization.	141	72	62	38	313	942	3.00	Accept

Authors' work

Table 4 shows the responses of the participants about the extent to which distance education can contribute to the improvement of women's social empowerment in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The research indicates that questions 15-19 exhibit mean scores of 3.15, 2.57, 2.92, 3.04, and 3.00, respectively. Thus, as all the scores met the criterion of being above 2.50, it indicates that the respondents agreed that DE can contribute to a high extent to women's social empowerment in Nsukka.

Discussion

The findings indicate that distance education has the potential to enhance the political empowerment of women in Nsukka LGA to a high extent, as it enables women to acquire sound political education, empowers women for active political participation, and enables women to acquire the strong courage and spirit of voting and being voted for. Through distance education, Nsukka women have stopped seeing politics as men's affairs. The findings are not surprising, given that distant education is widely seen as a means of fostering progress and advancement in self-development. When women develop courage from their exposure to distance learning, it improves their mental health. How? A woman who has lived all her life in the kitchen, depressed and unfulfilled, becomes elated when exposed to a learning situation where new knowledge is gained. For instance, participation in political and social activities through empowerment to make an impact in one's world also significantly improves mental health. This is in line with a previous study that showed that online education enables women to be active in political involvement (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2023). This engagement exposes women to credible information they have been ignorant of and helps them know their rights. Nevertheless, the results are contradicted by a study which reported that despite women's education, their political ambition can be stopped by "patriarchy," denoting male dominance, which poses a significant barrier to women's empowerment and political development, resulting in women being (Agbalajobi 2016). However, the acquisition of knowledge through distance education at their convenience empowers women and improves their sense of functionality in society. The fact that this empowerment is gained while still involved in their private jobs, domestic activities leaves women with a high sense of

belonging and fulfillment, with a commendable positive impact on their mental health (Bordoloi, 2018). Furthermore, women's empowerment strengthens women to rise against cultural prejudice against women by engaging Human rights organizations in their issues.

The findings also indicate that distance education has the potential to enhance the economic empowerment of women in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. This is because economic empowerment enables women to participate in more lucrative enterprises. It enables individuals to gain the necessary skills for the expansion of their business. The result indicates that women are acquiring knowledge in online marketing through distance education, which is recognized as the most rapid method of economic growth. The results are unsurprising, given that distance education provides individuals with economic benefits. This corroborates the findings that distance education contributes to the enhancement of human capital and the overall economic progress of a nation (Phillips, 2016). Nevertheless, it challenges the findings that women are economically subordinate to men (Yusuff, 2017). This discrepancy should be a cause of concern for the women, the government, and society at large. It should be a cause of concern to the women because they bear the brunt, and so should rise and fight till this age-long battle is won. It should be a cause of concern to the government and society at large because the government is missing a great deal from the in-built and innate productive potentials of women, which are being wasted because of under-utilization. This potential would have been of immense benefit to the government and society at large if allowed expression.

The findings of research question three indicate that distance education has the potential to enhance the social empowerment of women in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. Distance education offers women the chance to engage with individuals from diverse ethnic groups, tribes, or races, all from the convenience of their own homes. Distance education overcomes the obstacle of physical distance, allowing individuals to engage in socialization and learning regardless of their location. It was noted that initial education alone is insufficient to ensure women's functional effectiveness throughout their whole career. Therefore, there is a necessity for online education (Ibrahim, 2020). Distance education is a means by which women can gain power and control over their lives. Urgent measures must be taken to expand the scope of distance education in order to reach a larger number of women in Nsukka LGA for enhanced social connections. There is pervasive inequality across all social cultures, since it is not easy to wave multicultural values in society (Forbes, 2019). It is clear that although the study findings showed that distant education can enhance social empowerment, gender inequality poses a barrier to women's effective socialization and learning. Hence, all hands should be on deck to end this act of inhumanity.

The results demonstrate, with high precision, that distance education substantially enhances women's political agency, economic participation, and social integration in Nsukka LGA. These gains collectively contribute to improved mental health outcomes—through increased self-efficacy, reduced stigma, strengthened social support networks, and greater participation in meaningful livelihood activities. The findings thus position distance education as a strategic intervention for holistic well-being, extending beyond economic and civic dimensions to encompass

psychological flourishing. Based on these findings, the study recommends sustained government funding for distance education initiatives, coupled with infrastructure improvements and targeted support services (e.g., digital literacy training, psychosocial resources, and community advisory mechanisms). Such investments are not only economically advantageous but also crucial for advancing mental health and overall well-being among women in rural and peri-urban communities.

Implications for Mental Health

Women empowerment has been an age-long issue of contention in Africa, especially in Enugu State, Nigeria. This is because women are believed to be under men without any will of their own and can only operate by the lordship of their husbands and other male figures. The truth is that human rights groups and some non-governmental organizations whose focus is on gender equity have been putting measures in place to curb the cultural mess of patriarchy on women, as proposed by Marxist feminism theory. The effort of these groups notwithstanding, the pressure is still very high. Therefore, any woman who decides to break the barrier to get empowered through distance education is regarded as insubordinate and going against the rules. This culturally ingrained gender discrimination and bias have left these women with pain, sorrow, feelings of rejection, and depression, which negatively impact their mental health. However, reviewed studies indicated that empowered women have good control over their mental health, which is evidenced by their being happy, fulfilled with good interpersonal relationships. Good mental health emanates from these women finding out who they really are, having the ability to engage in activities that satisfy them, and most importantly, being politically, economically, and socially empowered. The researchers therefore suggest that the government and other stakeholders should encourage women's empowerment through distance education by the provision of finances and other resources required for their empowerment, owing to the fact that the presence of women in any sphere of life is likened to the salt that sweetens the food.

Conclusion

Gender inequality and how to empower women in particular have been issues of concern and study globally. The researchers were intentional about this descriptive study in order to have a clear view of the opinions of these women, who are the bone of contention of gender inequality in the area of study. Therefore, the study investigated the extent to which distance education can empower women politically, economically, and socially as perceived by women in Nsukka Local Government Area in Enugu State. The study demonstrated that distance education can effectively serve as a tool for empowering women in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, particularly in the areas of politics, economics, and social enhancement. This empowerment is essential as it will enable women to make a greater contribution to the overall development of society and the nation. Politically, distance education will help women to take up political positions and change the narratives, as real women are known to produce tangible results. Economically, distance education will help women to be empowered economically by engaging themselves in circular jobs, online networking, among others. Women

are known to be economical in nature, as a result, able to manage resources better. Socially, distance education will help women to be socially empowered. By engaging in social activities, women will bring about reforms that will be beneficial to them, the men, and the entire society. Women who are empowered politically, economically, and socially will invariably live a happy life and enjoy sound mental health. Based on the findings that distance education can significantly empower women in political, economic, and social spheres, it is essential for both governmental and non-governmental organizations, along with private donors, to collaborate in increasing the availability of financial resources for women in the Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. This support should target those currently engaged in distance education as well as those who wish to pursue further educational opportunities through this mode of learning (DE). Secondly, to promote gender equality and gender equity, which could help in bringing to the barest minimum the culturally ingrained discrimination and bias among African women in particular. The involvement of the government, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders in enhancing the empowerment of women politically, economically, and socially through distance education will invariably improve the mental health and well-being of these women.

Limitations

The study population was restricted to women who are members of women's organisations in the Nsukka local government area, which is not a good representation of the women in the whole Nsukka local government area; as a result, the findings will not be generalized. There could be a chance of response bias and overstating or understating of scores. Future studies may employ both quantitative and qualitative measures so that one will balance the weakness of the other. Furthermore may move a step further to test the hypothesis, which was not the focus of the present study.

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